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THE VALE OF SHADOWS

AND OTHER VERSES OF
THE GREAT WAR



BY

CLINTON SCOLLARD

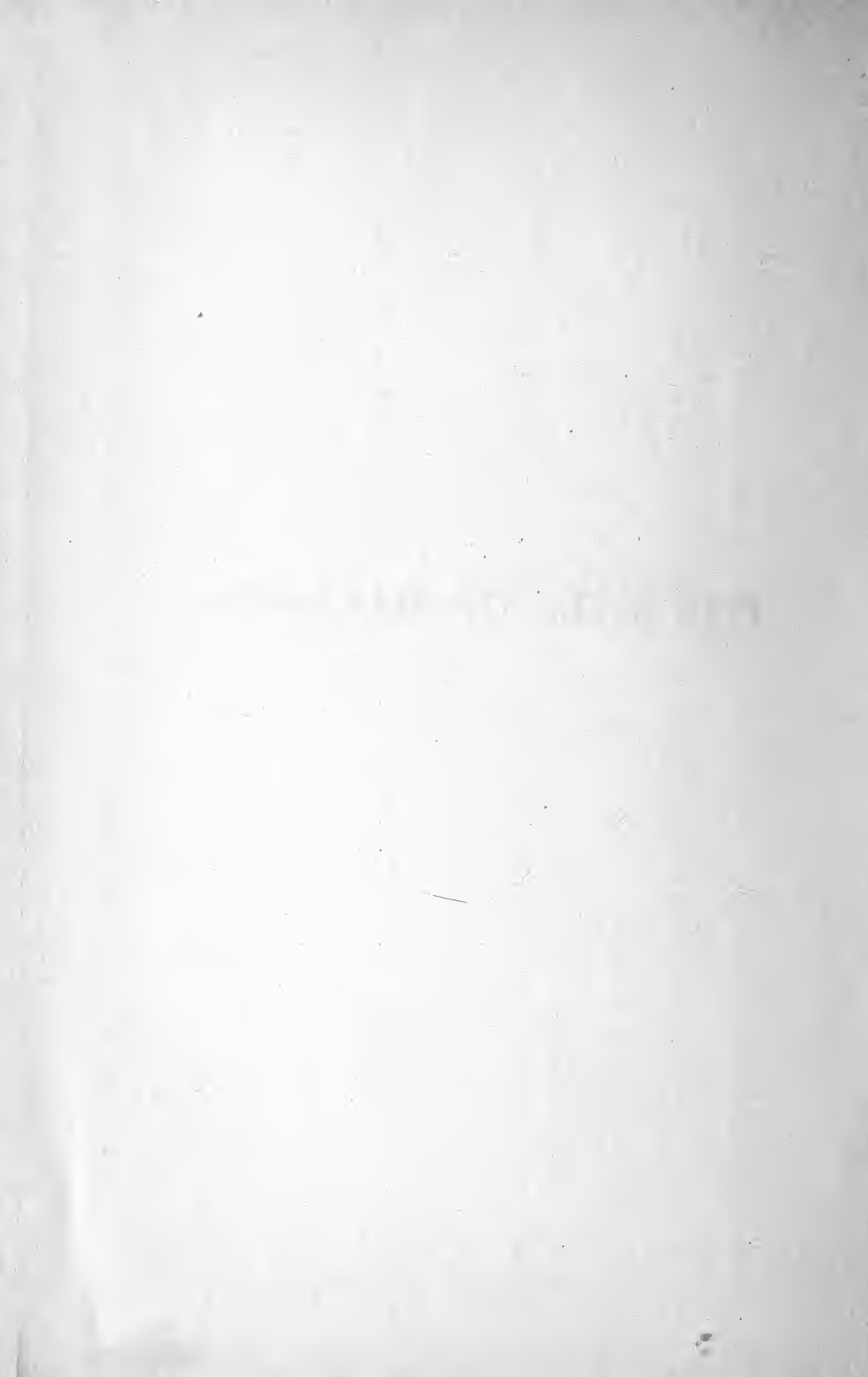


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THE VALE OF SHADOWS

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VALE OF SHADOWS
AND OTHER VERSES OF
THE GREAT WAR

BY
CLINTON SCOLLARD



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THE VALE OF SHADOWS

There is a vale in the Flemish land,
A vale once fair to see,
Where under the sweep of the sky's wide arch,
Though winter freeze or summer parch,
The stately poplars march and march,
Remembering Lombardy.

Here are men of the Saxon eyes,
Men of the Saxon heart,
Men of the fens and men of the Peak,
Men of the Kentish meadows sleek,
Men of the Cornwall cove and creek,
Men of the Dove and Dart.

Here are men of the kilted clans
From the heathery slopes that lie
Where the mists hang gray and the mists hang
white,
And the deep lochs brood 'neath the craggy
height,
And the curlews scream in the moonless night
Over the hills of Skye.

Here are men of the Celtic breed,
Lads of the smile and tear,
From where the loops of the Shannon flow,
And the crosses gleam in the even-glow,

And the halls of Tara now are low,
And Donegal cliffs are sheer.

And never a word does one man speak,
Each in his narrow bed,
For this is the Vale of Long Release,
This is the Vale of the Lasting Peace,
Where wars, and the rumours of wars, shall
cease,
The valley of the dead.

No more are they than the scattered scud,
No more than broken reeds,
No more than shards or shattered glass,
Than dust blown down the winds that pass,
Than trampled wefts of pampas-grass
When the wild herd stampedes.

In the dusk of death they laid them down
With naught of murmuring,
And laughter rings through the House of Mirth
To hear the vaunt of the high of birth,
For what are all the kings of earth
Before the one great King!

And what shall these proud war-lords say
At foot of His mighty throne?
For there shall dawn a reckoning day,
Or soon or late, come as it may,

When those who gave the sign to slay
Shall meet His face alone.

What, think ye, will their penance be
Who have wrought this monstrous crime?
What shall whiten their blood-red hands
Of the stains of riven and ravished lands?
How shall they answer God's stern commands
At the last assize of Time?

For though we worship no vengeance-god
Of madness and of ire,
No Presence grim, with a heart of stone,
Shall they not somehow yet atone?
Shall they not reap as they have sown
Of fury and of fire?

There is a vale in the Flemish land
Where the lengthening shadows spread
When day, with crimson sandals shod,
Goes home athwart the mounds of sod
That cry in silence up to God
From the valley of the dead!

PRAYER IN TIME OF CONFLICT

O thou Invisible Power,
Name some anointed hour
When strife shall cease and peace again shall
flower!

Thy sun and stars behold
Miseries manifold,
Terror and anguish that may not be told;

Lands severed by the sword,
Blood as red wine outpoured
Before Thy temples, hallowed and adored.

And hark!—upon the air
The burden of despair!
Mothers and children—fold them in Thy care!

Omnipotent, befriend!
Shelter, protect, forefend,
And bid this reign of hate and horror end!

THE CARNIVAL

Oh, the autumn-tide is the carnival tide,
And what shall the carnival wear?
Shall it be the blue of the haze-hung skies
That is blent with gold and with topaz dyes?
Shall it be the pied soft green that lies
On the meadow slope and the mountain side,
Shimmering far and fair?

Nay, none of these for the carnival tide,
For red is the carnival wear!
And never a redder carnival shone
Than now where the San and the Aisne flow on
In the red of the eve, in the red of the dawn,
And the war-fires rule and the thunders ride
Under the autumn air!

Of what avail is this carnival tide,
This blood-red carnival wear,
These carnival lines that rock and reel
And eddy and sally and meet and wheel
And break like a surge on a shore of steel?
Aye, what, when the doom-led men have died,
Does the King of the carnival care?

THE WATCHER BY THE TOWER

Upon a far land's borders,
At dawn and sunset hour,
There stands a silent Watcher,
The Watcher by the Tower!

The moments glide like ripples
Upon a summer rill;
Unchallenging, unchanging,
He keeps his vigil still.

The serried lines of armies
Sweep on, a mighty span;
They do not see the Watcher,
And yet he marks each man.

The blaring of the bugle,
The daring of the flute,
He knows upon what morrow
Their music will be mute.

The streaming of the guidons,
The gleaming of the guns,
Within his hand he holds them
As God His flaming suns.

Who is the grisly warder
With this supernal power?
Death is the silent Watcher,
The Watcher by the Tower!

THE NIGHT SOWERS

(FRANCE)

Lo, these are they that toil by night
 With mattock and with spade,
'Neath the faint flickering lanthorn light,
 In meadow and in glade!
Row upon long and crowded row,
How gruesome is the seed they sow!

Back on the fair and furrowed lands
 The earth and sod they toss,
And some, with reverential hands,
 Place here and there a cross,
A simple rough-hewn cross as though
To sanctify the seed they sow.

Oh, may some flower of love arise
 Above the bruised sod,
Some flower of love to greet the eyes,
 The grieving eyes of God!
Some flower of love whereon shall fall
The dews of peace perennial!

THE MADONNA OF TERMONDE

Within a convent in Termonde
An image of the Virgin stands
Serene, with half uplifted hands
And eyes that seem to look beyond
The mutability of things;
Around, war's ruthless ravagings,
The shattered roof, the crumbling wall,
Are like a sacrilege malign.
And yet some power—was it divine?—
Impalpable, impending there,
Has spared the image and the shrine
That cast a glamour over all
And bid the soul to bow in prayer.

A miracle, so some would say;
An omen. Be this as it may!
The sweet Madonna face inspires
The thought. Above the conflict fires,
The hates, the base desires that sway
The heart of man, God watches still,
And works toward that diviner day
When good shall triumph over ill.

LOUVAIN

From Mont Cesàr you might view the town,
That, ah, that was but yesterday!
Rich in romance and old renown,
Fair in the light of the Flemish day.
Hither once came a lord of Rome,
Raised him ramparts and reared him a home;
Below Saint Pierre and Saint Michel,
And the stately Hotel de Ville as well,
With their pointed windows and balustrades,
Their gables and turrets and open spires,
Took the gleam of the sunset fires
And the tender, tremulous twilight shades,
And the splendor of morn and noon's golden
 stain,
How lovely to view, Louvain, Louvain!

Here you might see the Dyle glide by,
That, ah, that was but yesterday!
Mirroring towers and the houses high,
Fair in the light of the Flemish day.
Here you might feel, in the Rue Namur,
Learning's spirit, of art the lure;
Here you list, like a silvery shower,
The spell of chimes at the quarter hour;
Here you might dream of the far gone days,
And the sturdy weavers, with warlike ways;

Of French, Burgundians, Spaniards,—all
That threatened the town with their tyrant
thrall;

Of counts and dukes with their pompous train,
And thine olden glory, Louvain, Louvain!

How are the glow and glamour gone!
That, ah, that was but yesterday!
What a woeful sight to look upon
Under the light of the Flemish day!
Down the ages the cry of shame
Will ring, and the naming of a name.
Scars irreparable,—ghastly scars,—
The roar of guns, and the soar of flame
Dimming the sun and blurring the stars,
'Twas thus that the later Vandals came,
Sacked and slew, in their vengeful ire,
And gloried over the glutted pyre.
And never the years can efface the stain
Of thy ruthless doom, Louvain, Louvain!

AT EPERNAY

At Epernay, when twilight fell,
The sky was like a crimson flower,
And the faint music of a bell
Down drifted from a lonely tower.

Against the wonder of the west
A line of poplars, gaunt and thinned,
Moved, as it seemed, in sad unrest,
And took the burden of the wind.

At Epernay, when closed the night,
There was no peaceful slumber-swoon,
For fires went up with lurid light,
And dimmed the glamour of the moon.

Strange fagots these that fed the flames,
The bodies of the maimed and lost;
And who shall ever know the names
Of those that swelled the holocaust!

For hours the tramp of serried hosts
Was heard beneath the sky's wide arch,
And grim the gathering of ghosts
Who joined in that nocturnal march!

And then the morn, the morn at last,
A pallid eremite in gray,
With eyes distended and aghast
Above the pyres at Epernay!

THE VINTAGE

Rumours of ravaging war perturb the mind,
Ruffling the channels of our wonted ease;
Within the sky we read red auguries,
And hear grim portents shivering down the
wind.

Not as aforetime do we fondly find
Orchestral notes or lulling harmonies
In the long plunge and murmur of the seas,
But discords horrent unto all mankind!

The fields of France are bright with poppy
flowers;
Along the terraced vineyards by the Rhine
The ripening grapes are crimsoning for the
wine;
Beneath the sun what fairer sight to see!
But ere the march of many hastening hours,
What will the bloom, what will the vintage
be?

HARVEST

The golden harvest-tide has gone,
The harvest season, bland and blithe,
But in the dusk and in the dawn
The mower Death still whets his scythe.

Since yet for him, yea, yet for him
Are many widespread fields to reap,
And he will store his harvest grim
In the eternal House of Sleep!

LUTHER

Luther, the world has need of thee!
Thy country needs thee at this hour
To scourge its world-embattled power
And stir to flame democracy.
Aye, for the fervour of thy words
Were more than guns, were more than swords!

Couldst thou but speak as thou of old
Didst, with thy stern admonishings,
The dawn of far diviner things
Might come; the people might behold
The fall of arrogance, the fall
Of that which holds fair freedom thrall!

Luther, the world has need of thee!
Thy country needs thy voice to show
What pain, what wantonness, what woe
Hate works, and greed and jealousy.
Thy voice!—for then might topple down
Sceptre and prince and king and crown!

IN THE NIGHT

Sometimes grim horror grips me in the night
When I am fain of sleep, when I am fain
Of surcease from the thought of woe and pain
Where fields once fair are stricken with the
 blight
And whelm of battle; then across my sight
Pale phantoms march, a melancholy train,
The unhouselled ghosts of the unnumbered
 slain
That mark Mars' mad and holocaustal rite.

What will the end be? Can no puissant power,
Man's dream and hope from some dim elder
 day,
With hand compassionate, exorcize the spell?
Or have we fallen on that awful hour
When hosts satanic, in their dire array,
Menace the world from out the yawn of
 hell?

SUNSET TREES

I see the sunset trees, line upon line on the sky;
I see the sunset trees, and they seem to be
marching by;

I see the sunset trees, and I mind me of armèd
men,

Men who will fade in the dusk, and will never
come again.

I see the sunset trees, supple and strong and
straight;

I see the sunset trees, like souls on the verge of
fate;

I see the sunset trees, then darkness swallows
them quite,

And I mind me of marching men lost in the
battle-night.

IN FRANCE

(1914)

“Is it well with Henri and Jean and Paul?”

An old bent man to a mother said,
As they met at morn by a little stall
Where the baker sold them their loaves of
bread.

“Is it well with Henri and Jean and Paul?”

And the mother bowed as beneath a rod;
Then she answered, “Aye, it is well with them
all,

Well with them all—they are all with God!”

IN THE PALE WATCHES OF THE MOON

Last night, in the pale watches of the moon,
While round the rising orb a halo hung,
I heard the far off muttering of the storm,
Grim detonations from behind the hills.
Then clouds usurped the zenith, grisly shapes
Black and portentous, where from tongues of
flame
Leaped forth and lashed the sky. And lo, it
seemed
As though earth shuddered, and a creeping
wind
Bore cries of terror, prophecies of doom,
The horror following in the wake of War!

THE EXPIATION

Mars, the insatiate, sanguine deity,
The flame is on his altar-fanes once more!
And spectral Death stands waiting at the door
Where women sit alone in misery.
The patient land and the long weary sea
Shiver expectant, while the rage and roar
Of combat deepen, and the mountains hoar
Watch what the awful holocaust may be.

But over all the dreadful battle-din,
Loosed as it were from out the mouth of Hell,
The shock, the thunder-boom, the wails, the
groans,
Another sound may rise—who can foretell?
But will that expiate this slaughter-sin,
The cries of kings upon their crumbling
thrones?

AT RHEIMS

I can recall one autumn day in Rheims
When the pervasive peace of the old town
Was as a benediction. All the air
Was peopled with the imminence of dreams,
Rapt visions of renown,
Of Clovis, and the fair and fabled dove
That from the immaterial realms above
The sacred vial bore
With oil to consecrate the brows of kings;
Of Louis Debonair,
And of Joan, the sainted maid, who wore
The searing crown of fire,
And from her sacrificial pyre
Passed to that rest beyond life's anguishings.
The twin cathedral towers
In the impending azure like great flowers,
Miraculously fashioned, seemed to show;
And the great window o'er the Virgin's portal
Was as a rose immortal
Shaming the sunset glow.

And now another autumn day in Rheims,
But not of visual glory, not of dreams!
Rather of horror and descending doom,
War's hideous blight upon the perfect bloom
Of art and beauty, sacrilege and shame,
And all through one invoking God's high name!

As the swift years recede,
All lovers of the loveliest things of earth
That through the handiwork of man have birth
Shall execrate the deed!

AFTER RHEIMS

Sovereign and militant lord of those that stain
Forevermore this age with wantonness,
Who from the gyves that held them in duress,
Unloosed the Furies with their bloody train,
After the ruthless crime of red Louvain,—
The ravage and the ruin pitiless,—
Now must you wreak your execrable excess
Upon art's loveliest, art's fairest fane!

Until the sands of time have ceased to run,
Go down the years with Attila the Hun,
Who cast o'er Christendom his sanguine spell!
He was God's scourge on cowed humanity;
You are God's servant—oh, rare irony!—
You call on Heaven; rather call on Hell!

WINE FOR THE KING

What is the word of the wind? The word of
the wind is *War!*—

All of the olden horror! Moloch and Mars and
Thor,

These supreme and sole, with Peace but a tram-
pled thing;

Rapine and lust and famine, and blood for the
wine of the King!

Tears may gather and fall through all of the
stricken lands;

The kine may brood in the stall, the harvest rot
where it stands;

The cup may be brimmed with gall, with the
sweat of suffering,

For others—and yet, and yet, there must be
wine for the King!

What of the awful cost? What of the price to
pay?

What of the loved and lost upon many a san-
guine day?

What of the bells that toll?—Hark, how the
echoes ring!

Naught! for there must be wine—red, red wine
for the King!

CAN IT BE?

Down my mind's corridors
Go murmuring the memories of old wars;
By day and night they haunt me, anguished
cries
From fields whence only the lark's song should
rise,
Or the blithe reaper's shout amidst the grain.
And now there comes a grimmer, greater pain
Voicing its suffering. O God, what gain
In all this woe of nations? Can it be
Through the dark valley that mankind shall win
From lust of power and jealousy and sin
To heights of peace and perfect amity?

NIGHT IN THE TRENCHES

The moon above the trenches shone
Like a grim beldam, wizened, wan ;
It leered and jeered till some one swore
In jets of ribald metaphor.

Silence, and then a song, and then
The ghastly quietude again,
Pierced by the shrieking of a shell
Like a lost soul cast down to hell.

And so till dawn began to creep
Across the land, when soothing sleep
About its hallowed influence shed
And none could tell the quick or dead.

THE TIDES OF YSER

The tides of Yser crawl and creep ;
The tides of Yser creep and crawl,
And be they shallow, be they deep,
Death is the deepest bacchanal!

He laughs the while his cup he drains
(Hymning the song of old he hymned!)
From Yser tide, with crimson stains,
From Yser tide, with crimson brimmed!

MOTHER AND SON

“O little son, O little son, why sob you in af-
fright?

What hear you in the night?”

“O mother mine, O mother mine, I pray thee
hold me tight!

I hear the roar of many guns. There is a
dreadful sight!”

“O little son, O little son, there is no beam or
gleam;

It must be but a dream!”

“O mother mine, O mother mine, I hear the
bullets scream,

And dead men lie with staring eyes beside a
swollen stream!”

“O little son, O little son, it may not—may not
be,

This awful agony!”

“O mother mine, O mother mine, the vision will
not flee;

And, mother mine, among them there my
father’s face I see!”

WHAT TIDINGS?

What tidings, winds of springtide, do ye bear?—

What from the slopes of castle-guarded
Rhine?

What from the ancient shrine of Constan-
tine,

And from the fertile Flemish fields and fair?

What word from where the Russian steppes lie
bare

Beneath a shrouded sun? What speech is
thine

From England, girdled by the gray sea-brine,
And France the dauntless and the debonair?

What message from the Danube? Plangent
tunes

Have ye aforesaid borne across the seas,—

The hates and horrors of the bygone years,—

But never frantic discords, frenzied runes

Of murder and of madness such as these,—

The Furies mocking at God's singing
spheres!

THE WAR OF KINGS

From dawn to dusk reign horror and affright,
And the sad night no healing respite brings;
In all its hideous panoply of might,
This is the war of kings!

The people are but pawns upon the board;
What of their wants, their woes, their suffer-
ings?
Speak, Death, dark watcher both by field and
ford,
In this grim war of kings!

Will history still repeat the sanguine past,
With all its trail of ruthless anguishings?
Oh, may this slaughter-carnival be the last—
The last dread war of kings!

THE BELLS OF TERMONDE

Bells of Termonde, chimes that have rung so
long,
Filling the Flemish air
With mellow call to prayer,
Hushed now your matin and your vesper song;
Silence about you,—silence and despair!

Yet Hope bids lift the veil, and hear beyond
The stillness brooding deep
As the vast seas of sleep
Your melody, O fair bells of Termonde,
Across the fields where men shall sow and
reap!

For o'er the land there shall dawn brighter
days,
Your fertile land and fond,
And hearts shall yet respond
To your rapt music, your harmonious lays,
O silent bells, O sweet bells of Termonde!

THE WINDS OF GOD

Across the azure spaces,
 Athwart the vasts of sky,
With winnowings of mighty wings
 The winds of God go by.

Above the meres and mountains,
 With unseen sandals shod,
Above the plains, with choric strains,
 Sweep by the winds of God.

“Peace!—in His name!” they murmur;
 “Peace—in His name!” they cry—
Oh, men, give ear! Do ye not hear
 The winds of God go by?

AT THE GOLDEN HORN

The sunrise cry from many minarets
 Floats down the vernal morning, clear and
 cool;
From Asian shores a bland breeze westward
 sets,
And stirs the almond trees of Istamboul.

As on the mosques the first rays slantwise shine,
 And golden glory floods the gloomy gray,
The city of imperial Constantine
 Uplifts her weary lids to greet the day.

The torpor of decay upon her lies;
 Her heart is palsied though her face be fair,
Though still majestic to the cloudless skies
 Aya Sofia rears its dome in the air.

What though the fitful glow of life seem warm,
 There broods a fatal apathy o'er all;—
It is the hush that bodes the breaking storm,
 The calm that comes before the final fall!

PERSEUS

The old Medusa War, of grim array,
Lo, we had deemed the grisly horror dead!
May there arise some Perseus Peace to slay
This new Medusa of the gorgon head!

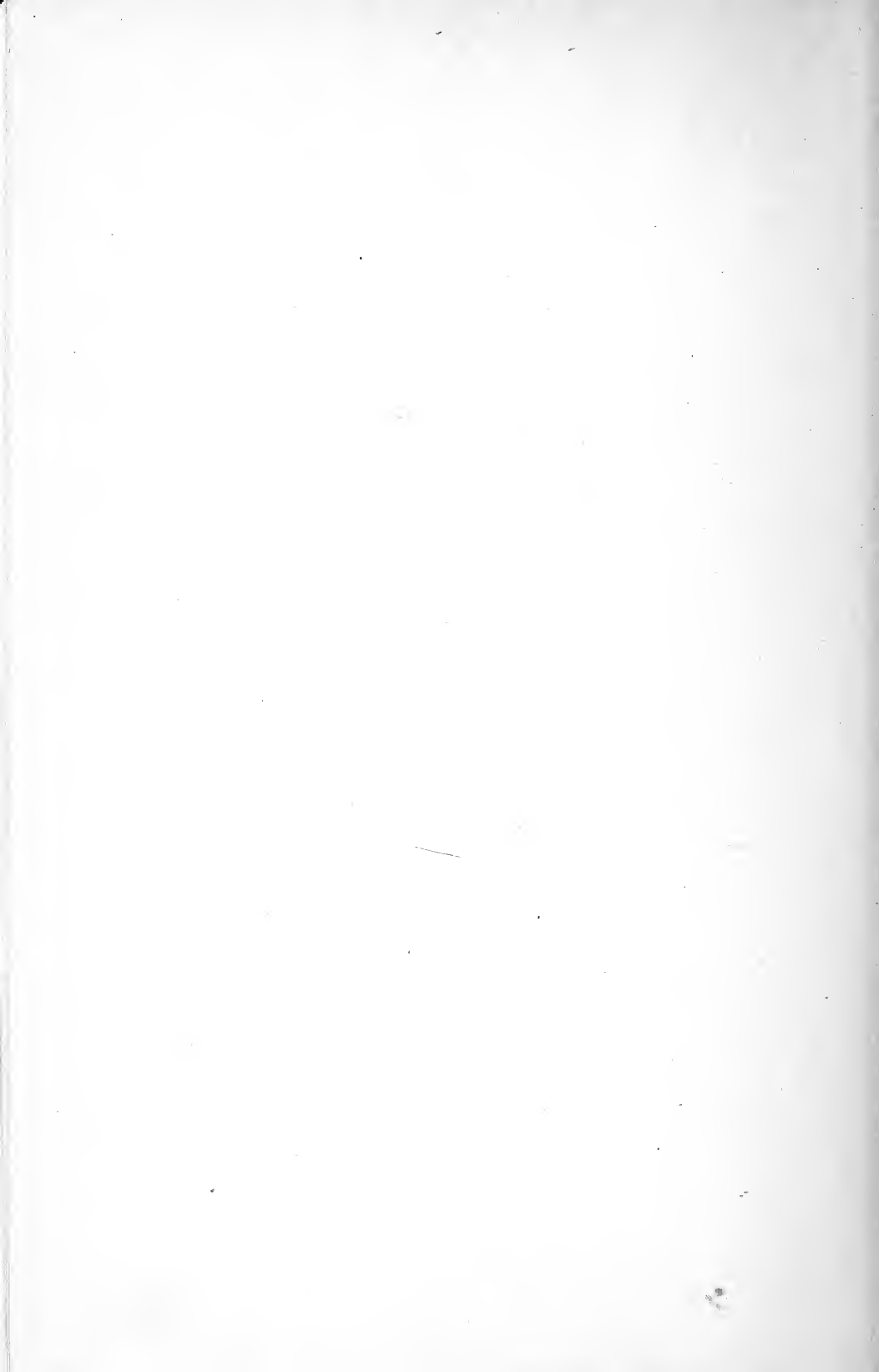
BRAVERY

Valiant the men who march in swinging lines
And at the mouths of cannon face their fate;
But no less radiantly the courage shines
Of those who bide behind and watch—and
wait!

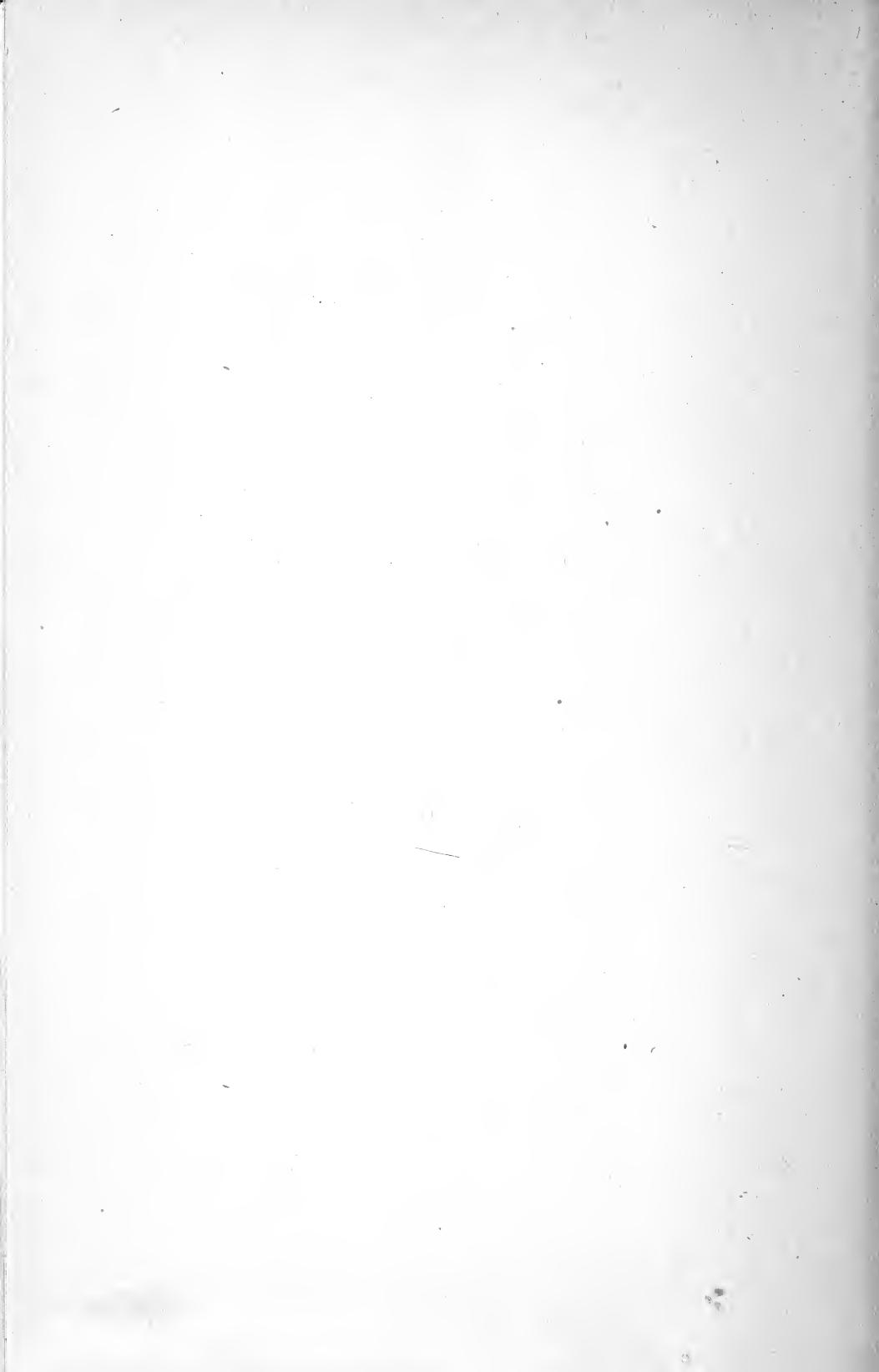
VICTORIES

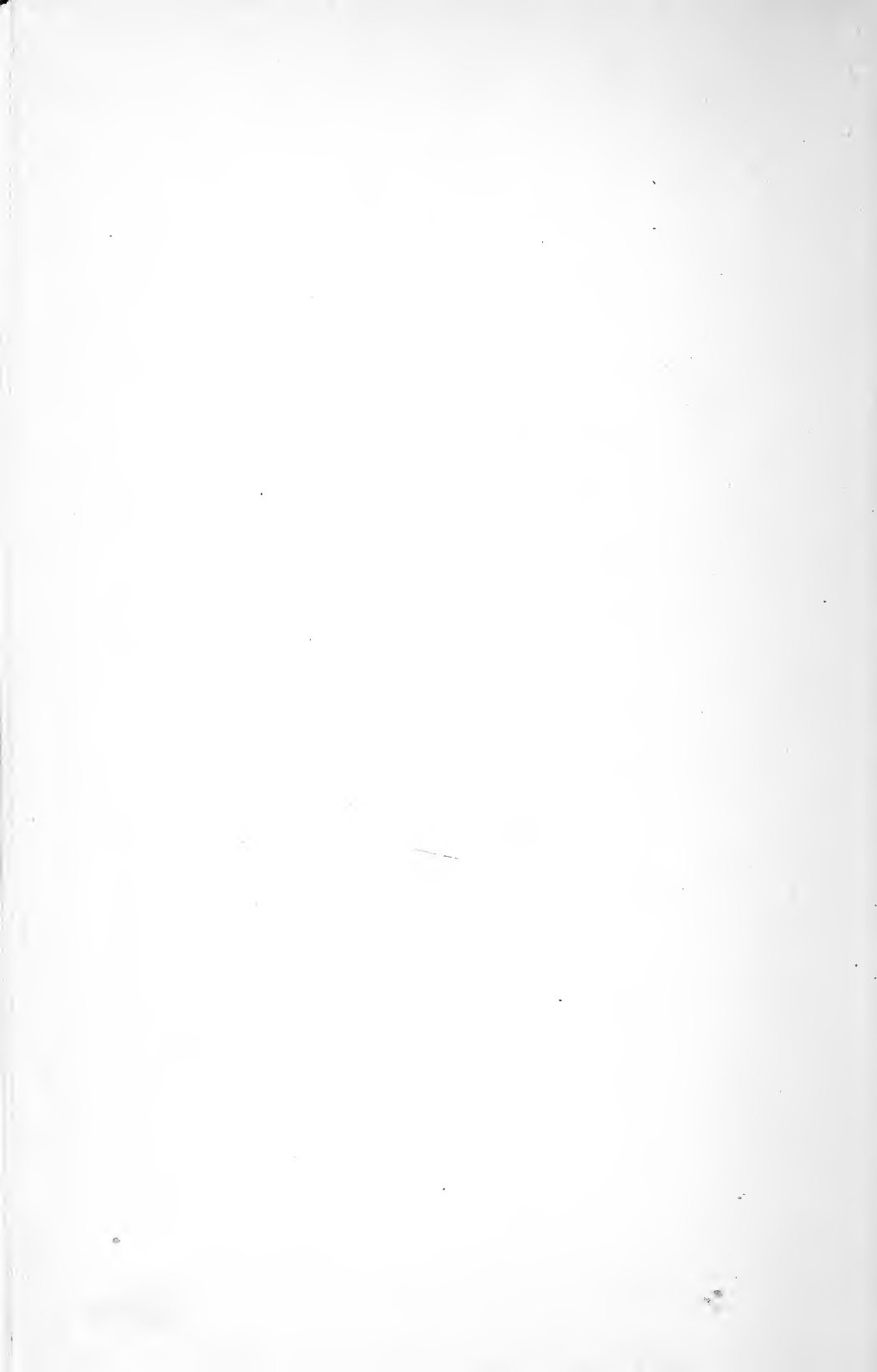
Strife strides o'er alien lands with deafening
 roar,

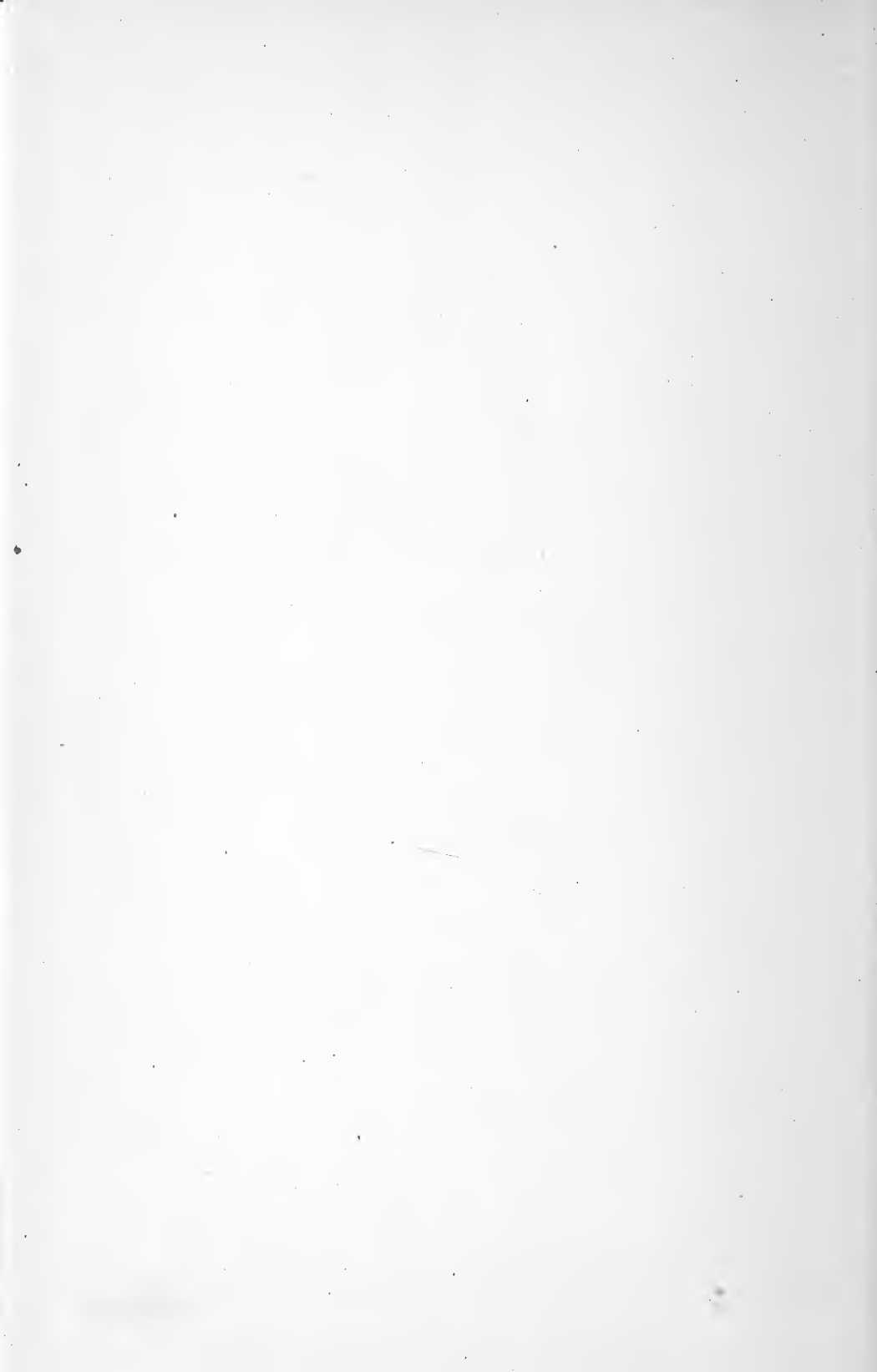
And, as we list, the fearsome sounds increase;
May all our triumphs be, from shore to shore,
The victories of Peace!











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